

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 20085

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, TH

SUBJ: COMMENTS OF SENIOR THAI OFFICIAL ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE

1. DURING CALL BY AMBASSADOR DECEMBER 23 ON THAI MINISTER OF DEFENSE GENERAL KRUEEN SUTTHANIN, KRUEEN EMPHATICALLY STRESSED TO THE AMBASSADOR RTARF'S URGENT NEED FOR REPLACEMENT WEAPONS AND SPARE PARTS, AND ASKED WHEN HE COULD EXPECT A REPLY TO KRIANGSAK PAPER ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS GIVEN UNDER SECRETARY CLEMENTS IN OCTOBER. KRUEEN COMMENTED THAT HIGH-RANKING US VISITORS CONTINUALLY PRAISED US-THAI FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION AND PROMISED TO HELP WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE, "BUT NOBODY EVER DELIVERS ANYTHING". (COMMENT: FY75 MAP RECEIPTS BY RTARF TO DATE TOTAL \$978,721 FOR TRAINING AND \$877,620 FOR PAYMENTS TO US TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVES--SEE PARA 3.) WE REBUTTED THE KRUEEN CHARGE AS BEING VASTLY OVERSTATED BUT IT IS TRUE THAT HIGH-LEVEL VISITORS HAVE OCCASIONALLY IN YEARS PAST MADE STATEMENTS WHICH LED TO EXAGGERATED THAI EXPECTATIONS.

2. AMBASSADOR SAID HE HOPED TO BE ABLE SOON TO REPLY TO KRIANGSAK PAPER. HE SAID IT WAS EVIDENT FROM HIS DISCUSSIONS AT HIGH LEVELS IN THE DEPARTMENT AND THE

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PENTAGON IN OCTOBER THAT THE USG WOULD NOT BE ABLE

TO FULFILL ALL THE REQUESTS PRESENTED IN THE PAPER. INFLATION IN US AND USG BUDGETARY PROBLEMS WERE IMPOSING CONSTRAINTS ON GRANT AID PROGRAMS. HOWEVER, US OFFICIALS WERE STILL STUDYING AND DIGESTING KRIANGSAK PAPER, AND SEEKING WAYS AND MEANS, PERHAPS THROUGH USE OF EXCESS DEFENSE ARTICLES, TO BE AS RESPONSIVE AS POSSIBLE. AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT REDUCED AUTHORIZATION IN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT PASSED BY CONGRESS IN DECEMBER WAS ALSO IMPORTANT FACTOR, AND THAT NO APPROPRIATION HAD YET BEEN PASSED. HE STRESSED THAT LARGE SUMS ALLOCATED BY USG FOR SUPPORT OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA DEFENSE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY RTG AS MAJOR USG CONTRIBUTION TOWARD DEFENSE OF SEA, INCLUDING THAILAND.

3. AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT RTG FAILURE TO COMPLETE REQUISITE AGREEMENT UNDER ARTICLE 505(F) OF FAA WAS IMPEDING TURNOVER TO RTARF OF "PIN KLAO" AS WELL AS SOME SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT. GENERAL KRUEEN UNDERTOOK TO RAISE WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY NEED FOR PROMPT ACTION TO SIGN AGREEMENT.

4. ON DECEMBER 26, FONMIN CHARUNPHAN RAISED QUESTION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE DURING CALL BY AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. CHARUNPHAN ACCEPTED SHIFT IN NATURE OF US ECONOMIC AID BUT MADE STRONG PITCH FOR CONTINUED MAP, STRESSING THAT US WAS SOLE POTENTIAL SOURCE OF MILITARY AID, UNLIKE CASE OF ECONOMIC AID. FACED WITH RISING DEFENSE COSTS, CHARUNPHAN SAID THAILAND HAD CONTINUING NEED FOR US MILITARY ASSISTANCE, AND RTG HOPED LEVEL THEREOF COULD BE KEPT UP. AMBASSADOR'S REPLY WAS ALONG SAME LINES AS IN CONVERSATION WITH KRUEEN.
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